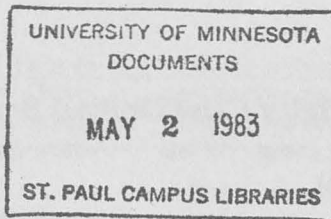


# Judging Dairy Cattle



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## Introduction

Judging dairy cattle is a **comparative** evaluation of cattle. Strong and weak points of animals are compared. The animals are then ranked based on their closeness to "ideal" breed characteristics.

Desirable dairy conformation involves **functional** traits associated with the volume and efficiency of milk production. A firmly attached udder that is held above the hocks, sound feet and legs, angularity, and width of chest and rump are examples of functional traits. Many characteristics desirable in dairy cattle are in contrast to the muscularity and thickness desired in beef cattle.

Selecting dairy cattle with regard to conformation that is functionally correct may:

- allow cows to stay in herds longer than cows with serious structural defects,

- increase the sale value of both registered and grade cattle,
- develop pride in working with "good" dairy cattle, and
- encourage youth to enter or remain in the dairy industry.

## Parts of the Dairy Cow

Before beginning to judge dairy cattle, judges should become familiar with the parts of the dairy cow. Figure 1 shows the location and name of the various body parts of dairy cattle. It is essential to learn and use these terms for dairy judging.

Figure 1. Parts of the Dairy Cow

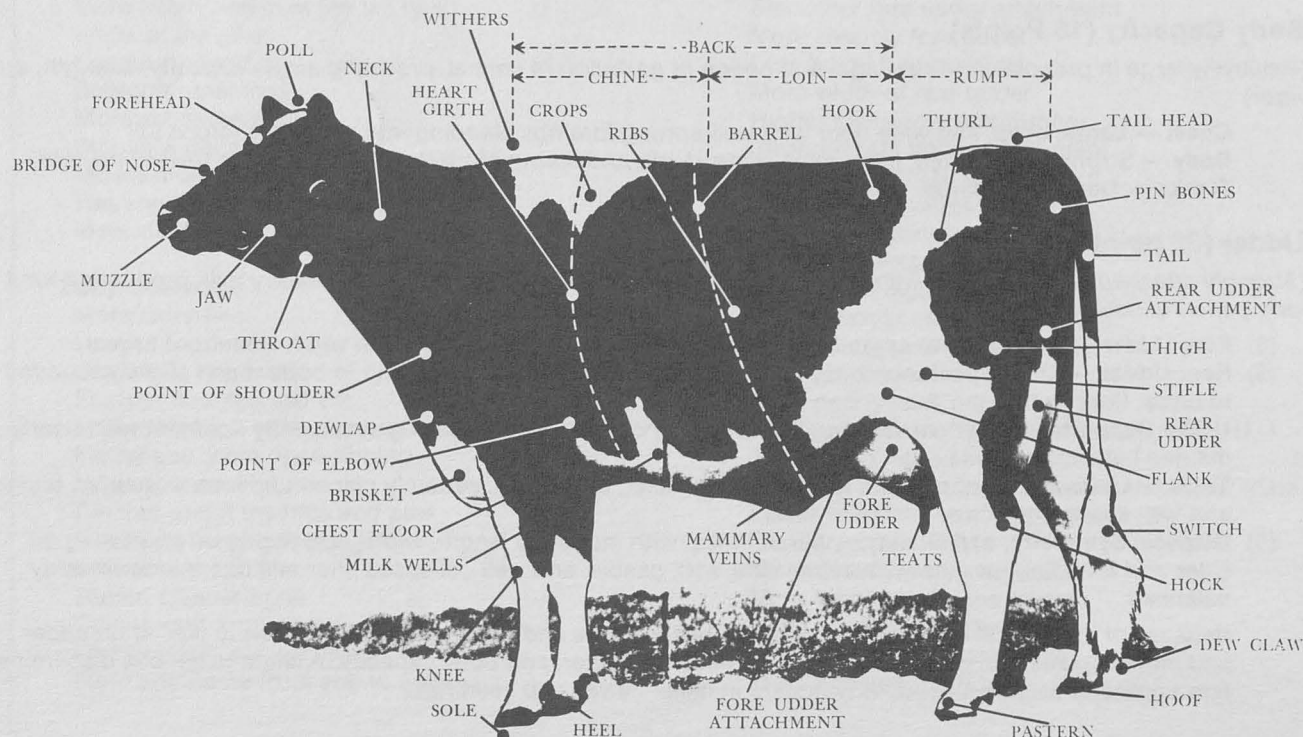


Figure 2. Dairy cow score card

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## Dairy Cow Unified Score Card

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### 1. General Appearance (35 points)

(Attractive individuality with femininity, vigor, stretch, scale, and harmonious blending of all parts with impressive style and carriage)

(5) **Breed Characteristics**

(5) **Stature** — Height including moderate length in the leg bones with a long bone pattern throughout the body structure.

(5) **Front End** — Adequate constitution with strength and dairy refinement.

**Shoulder Blades and Elbow** — Set firmly and smoothly against the chest wall and withers to form a smooth union with the neck and body.

**Chest** — Deep and full with ample width between front legs.

(5) **Back** — Straight and strong; loin broad, strong, and nearly level and rump long, wide, and nearly level with pin bones slightly lower than hip bones.

**Thurls** — High and wide apart.

**Tail Head** — Set nearly level with topline and with tail head and tail free from coarseness.

(15) **Legs and Feet** — Bone flat and strong.

**Front Legs** — Straight, wide apart, and squarely placed.

**Hind Legs** — Nearly perpendicular from hock to pastern from a side view and straight from the rear view.

**Hocks** — Cleanly molded and free from coarseness and puffiness.

**Pasterns** — Short and strong with some flexibility.

**Feet** — Short and well rounded with deep heel and level sole.

### 2. Dairy Character (20 Points)

(Angularity and general openness without weakness, freedom from coarseness, and evidence of milking ability with udder quality giving due regard to stage of lactation)

**Neck** — Long, lean, and blending smoothly into shoulders; clean-cut throat, dewlap, and brisket.

**Withers** — Sharp with chine prominent.

**Ribs** — Wide apart; rib bones wide, flat, and long.

**Thighs** — Incurving to flat and wide apart from the rear view, providing ample room for the udder and its rear attachment.

**Skin** — Thin, loose, and pliable.

### 3. Body Capacity (10 Points)

(Relatively large in proportion to size, age, and period of gestation of animal, providing ample capacity, strength, and vigor)

**Chest** — Large, deep, and wide floor with well-sprung fore ribs blending into shoulders; crops full.

**Body** — Strongly supported; long, deep, wide; depth and spring of rib tending to increase toward the rear.

**Flanks** — Deep and refined.

### 4. Udder (35 points)

(Strongly attached; well balanced with adequate capacity possessing quality indicating heavy milk production for a long period of usefulness)

(6) **Fore Udder** — Strongly and smoothly attached; moderate length and uniform width from front to rear.

(8) **Rear Udder** — Strongly attached; high and wide with uniform width from top to bottom and slightly rounded to udder floor.

(11) **Udder Support** — Udder carried snugly above the hocks showing a strong suspensory ligament with clearly defined halving.

(5) **Teats** — Uniform size of medium length and diameter, cylindrical, squarely placed under each quarter, plumb, and well spaced from side and rear views.

(5) **Balance, Symmetry, and Quality** — Symmetrical with moderate length, width, and depth; no quartering on sides and level floor as viewed from the side; soft, pliable, and well collapsed after milking; quarters evenly balanced.

Because of the natural undeveloped udder in heifer calves and yearlings, less emphasis is placed on udder and more is placed on general appearance, dairy character, and body capacity. A slight to serious discrimination applies to overdeveloped, fatty udders in heifer calves and yearlings.

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## Evaluation of Defects

### Disqualifications:

1. Total blindness
2. Permanent lameness.
3. One or more blind quarters in cows.
4. Evidence of sharp (unethical) practice.
5. Freemartin heifers, unless proved pregnant.

### Serious Discriminations

1. Strong evidence of blindness
2. Wry face (substantial twist to face).
3. Parrot jaw (pronounced overshot).
4. Badly winged shoulders.
5. Very abnormal tail setting.
6. Very weak pasterns, extreme toeing-out in rear, badly bowed pasterns, or a marked spread of toes.
7. Crampy hind legs.
8. An extreme lack of size.
9. Very abnormal milk or a partially impaired quarter.
10. Broken udder attachment.
11. One or more very light quarters, hard spots in udder, or obstruction in teat.
12. Lack of defined halving with deep udder and/or strutting teats.

13. Severely overconditioned.

14. Uncalved heifers showing evidence of having been milked.

### Slight Discriminations:

1. Blindness in one eye.
2. Cross or bulging eyes.
3. A slight tendency toward a parrot jaw.
4. Cropped ears.
5. Loose shoulder attachment with a slight tendency to wing.
6. Slightly wry tail or other slight deficiency about the tail setting.
7. Temporary lameness.
8. Evidence of fluid in hocks.
9. Slightly undersized.
10. Temporarily abnormal milk.
11. A tendency toward weakness in udder attachment.
12. Slightly unbalanced quarters.
13. Temporary or minor injuries that do not affect the animal's usefulness.
14. Slightly overconditioned.

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## Score Card

The Purebred Dairy Cattle Association (PDCA) has developed a score card (Figure 2) that describes ideal dairy conformation. Four major categories are defined: general appearance, dairy character, body capacity, and udder. Learn the traits that contribute to each major category. Whether consciously or not, the score card is referred to in all placings of dairy cattle.

## Breed Characteristics

Unique breed characteristics should be considered when using the score card. Consider the following points for the six major dairy breeds:

### Ayrshire

Color — White and cherry red or mahogany.  
Size — Mature cows should weight 1200 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Well-attached udders, dairyness.

### Brown Swiss

Color — Solid brown varying from very light to dark.  
Size — Mature cows should weight 1500 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Size, strength, correct legs.

### Guernsey

Color — Fawn and white.  
Size — Mature cows should weight 1150 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Femininity, refinement, with increasing emphasis on size and strength.

### Holstein

Color — Black and white or red and white.  
Size — Mature cows should weight 1500 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Rugged, but feminine, with size and vigor.

### Jersey

Color — Fawn or fawn and white.  
Size — Mature cows should weight 1000 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Extreme angularity, stretch, outstanding udders, dished foreheads.

### Milking Shorthorn

Color — Solid red, solid white, roan, or red and white.  
Size — Mature cows should weigh 1400 pounds or more.  
Emphasis — Sharpness with power, strength of udder attachments.

## Judging Procedures

Good judges of dairy cattle need a definite mental image of the ideal animal for the breed being judged. This image can be developed by observing cattle at shows, visiting outstanding herds, studying breed journals, and observing personally-owned dairy cattle closely. There is no substitute for the first-hand experience of seeing and studying many dairy animals.

The first impression of an animal is often quite valuable. Stick with it unless further inspection gives good reason to change. If a class of animals has an easy top or bottom, recognize this and spend most of the time on more difficult placings in the class.

Observe walking animals for ease of movement. Also, check for strength of loin, firmness of udder attachments, and set to the rear legs. A front view of the animal shows width of chest. A rear view aids in evaluating sharpness of withers, spring of ribs, width of rump, and width of rear udder. The udder often becomes the deciding factor in close placings. Milking cows are usually placed over dry cows of equal merit.

Permanent lameness or a blind quarter disqualifies a cow (or places her at the bottom of the class). Udders with broken attachments warrant serious discrimination. Light quarters and winged shoulders received slight to serious discrimination, depending on severity. Temporary or minor injuries receive only a slight discrimination.

Attempting to justify decisions while placing classes helps to avoid bad placings. Develop a good system to evaluate classes such as the simple method shown in Figure 3 for ranking each cow in a class for each major category on the score card.

**Figure 3: Evaluating a class on the four major categories**

Class <u>HOLSTEIN - 2 yr. old</u>				
Name <u>John or Mary Judge</u>				
	Placings			
	1st	2d	3d	4th
General Appearance	3	4	2	1
Body Capacity	2	4	3	1
Dairy Character	2	3	4	1
Mammary System	3	2	1	4
FINAL PLACING	3	2	4	1

### Judging Dairy Heifers

The judging of dairy heifers differs somewhat from the method of judging cows. The goal is to predict how each heifer will mature. Heifers with very deep bodies often mature early into small cows. Stretchy and long-legged heifers, if they have adequate heart girth and spring of rib, usually develop depth of body as they mature. Heifers with strong loins usually mature with straight toplines; weakness of loin often becomes more pronounced with age. Udders of young heifers are not developed enough to accurately predict their future shape. However, it is undesirable for the udders of heifers to have excess fatty tissue or the appearance of being suckled.

### Oral Reasons

Practice in judging dairy cattle improves observation, analytical, and decision-making skills. A judge's mastery of these skills is tested when giving reasons. Judging events and contests often conclude by having judges present oral reasons for their placings. Defending deci-

sions with reasons is challenging and provides excellent training in organizing and explaining conclusions.

#### Correct reasons:

- require careful observation of the cattle,
- involve organization,
- permit expression of thought,
- develop logical and convincing reasoning,
- require weighing differences and reaching conclusions, and
- develop communication skills.

**Figure 4: Sample Notes**

CLASS NO. 1  
 BREED HOLSTEIN 2 yr. old

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1. smallest, short-bodied, black  
 2. very angular, weak loin, speckled  
 3. top udder, stylish, shallow body  
 4. tallest, deep udder, plain head

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3/2 Mammary: rear udder width  
 most bloom  
 firmer fore udder  
 General: stronger loin  
 fuller crops + chine  
 straighter rear legs  
 Grant: sharpness + depth of body

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2/4 Dairy: sharper at withers  
 more open ribbing  
 cleaner thighs  
 Body: deeper heart girth  
 greater spring rear rib  
 Mammary: snugger udder  
 Grant: taller + width at hocks

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4/1 General: taller longer  
 smoother blending parts  
 wider rump  
 Body: deeper barrel  
 wider chest  
 Grant: center support

Clear, accurate, and comparative notes will help to reconstruct a mental picture of individual animals in judging contests. Figure 4 shows one method of taking notes. Select and develop a workable method of taking notes that includes:

- a brief description (black, small, horned, fancy, thick, low-set, speckled, etc.) of each animal to aid mental recall,
- several distinct differences for each placing that will be used in the reasons, and
- a list of important grants (areas in which the lower-placed animal holds an advantage).

Major differences should be emphasized in reasons, and all differences mentioned must be real. Most contest officials are sensitive to inaccurate comments. A correct set of reasons will outscore a fancy, incorrect set.

Basic points for presenting oral reasons in judging contests are:

- **Never** talk longer than two minutes (1-1½ minutes are better).
- **Organize** reasons in the following order — identify the class and the placing, a statement of introduction (optional), top comparison followed by grants,

**Figure 5. A list of comparative terms**

### **General Appearance**

Taller and longer  
Greater size and scale  
More upstanding  
Longer from end to end  
More style and balance  
Fancier  
More feminine head  
Broader muzzle  
Smoother blending throughout  
Neck blends more smoothly with the shoulders  
More harmonious blending of parts  
Tighter at the shoulders  
Stronger in the chine region  
Straighter topline  
Wider and more nearly level rump  
More nearly level from hips to pins  
Tail head sits more neatly between a wider set of pins  
More neatly laid in at the tail head  
Wider at the pins  
Longer rumped  
Straighter rear legs  
More set to the hock  
Stands wider at the hock  
Moves more freely  
Has shorter and stronger pasterns  
More depth of heel

### **Dairy Character**

More dairy-like  
Longer and leaner neck  
Cleaner in the throat  
Sharper over the withers  
More definition about the withers  
Flatter and more open ribbing  
More openness of rib  
Cleaner about the hips and pins  
More incurving in the thighs  
Leaner in the thighs  
Flatter, cleaner bone  
Cleaner-cut throughout  
Carrying less excess flesh  
More angularity from end to end

### **Body Capacity**

More total dimension of body  
Greater total capacity  
More powerfully built  
Longer bodied  
More width of chest  
Wider between the front legs  
Larger heart girth  
Fuller in the crops  
More spring of fore (or rear) rib  
More boldly sprung ribs  
Greater depth of ribbing  
More length of rib  
Deeper bodied  
More depth of barrel

### **Udder**

Firmer fore udder attachment  
Smoother fore udder attachment  
More shapely fore udder  
Less bulgy fore quarters  
More width of rear udder  
Higher rear udder attachment  
Stronger rear udder attachment  
More symmetry to the quarters  
More balance of rear quarters  
Stronger center support  
Clearer halving to the udder  
Udder held higher above the hocks  
Carries udder closer to the body  
More snugly held udder  
Less pendulous udder  
More nearly level udder floor  
Less quartering of the udder  
Teats hang more nearly plumb  
Teats set more squarely beneath the udder floor  
Less width between front teats  
Smaller, shorter teats  
More desirably shaped teats  
More bloom about the udder  
More capacious udder  
Less congestion in the udder  
More apparent quality



3 1951 D01 927 380 9

middle comparison followed by grants,  
bottom comparison followed by grants,  
a brief statement about the bottom animal, and  
closing remarks.

- **Compare** animals, do **not** describe them.
- **Accuracy** is critical. Do **not** lie, make up points, or generalize. Remember to mention desirable traits of lower-placing animals.
- **Terms** must be used correctly (Figure 5). Strong and positive statements are preferred. Avoid, "I think," "I guess," "I felt," or "maybe."
- **Delivery** should be relatively smooth, comfortably paced using a natural voice, and easy and interesting to follow. A pleasant, conversational style and enthusiasm are far more important than smoothness. Taping reasons on a recorder may aid in improving techniques.
- **Appearance** includes eye contact, conveying confidence, standing squarely about 5-10 feet from the official, and limiting gestures. Notes are not allowed.

## Written Reasons

Written reasons are sometimes used to measure judging ability. The same points covered for oral reasons apply to written reasons, including structure and organization. Be legible, neat, avoid misspelled words, and get to the main points quickly. Avoid wordiness. Figure 6 shows an example of reasons.

**Figure 6. Sample set of reasons**

### Class 2 3-year-old Jerseys

I placed this class of 3-year-old Jerseys 4-1-3-2. 4 excels the class in strength of udder attachments and power.

Because of her advantage in udder, I placed 4 over 1. 4 has a higher and wider rear udder attachment, a smoother fore udder attachment, and more bloom to the udder today. 4 also has greater strength and depth of rear rib than does 1. On the other hand, 1 is a taller and longer cow with more style, particularly about the head.

1, the horned cow, places over 3 because she is taller at the withers and is longer from head to tail. To complement this, 1 has a distinct advantage in dairy character, being sharper at the withers with more definition at the hips and pins. Yes, 3 is more powerful, with a wider chest and more boldly sprung ribbing.

In my bottom placing, 3 easily places over 2 because of her decided advantage in udder. 3 has a firmer fore udder attachment and more desirable teat shape, criticizing 2's teats for being funnel shaped. Furthermore, 3 is straighter over the topline than is 2, with a stronger loin and a tail head that sits more neatly between the pins. Granted, 2 has a longer, leaner neck and is more angular throughout.

Although 2 is very dairy-like, she just lacks the straightness of lines and strength of udder attachments to place any higher in this class of 3-year-old Jerseys which I place 4-1-3-2.